

David Charles'

Boston Vintage Sports Flashback

ISSUE #5 – March 1, 2023

FEBRUARY 26, 1977

CELTICS' ROAD SHOW BLASTS SONICS FOR 7TH WIN IN 9 GAMES

By John Powers, The Boston Globe

SEATTLE - It wasn't even interesting. . .which was probably the best thing about it, given what happened the last time out. The evening didn't end with a last-second stuff or ecreams of outrage about an an called traveling violation, as it had seven weeks earlier.

This time, it was Boston 102, Seattle 92, and the last 14 minutes or so were merely a formality Friday night. By then, the Celtics had run off with a 21-point lead (80-59) and hidden somewhere in a coliseum alcove, and kept the Sonics at arm's length the rest of the game.

It was unexpectedly easy, but with a game at Phoenix last night and another on national television (CBS, WBZ radio, 4:45 p.m.) at Denver this afternoon, there were no quarrels with it.

"I don't think we played really well," Tom Heinsohn was saying afterwards, "but that's what happens on these trips where you have a few days off." Since Sunday, there had been only one night's work, at Portland on Tuesday. Three days of lying around hotel rooms with an ocean view merely induced sluggishness.

"I really felt ugly," John Havlicek said. "That bothers you. You can get too much rest." Only Saunders (14 points) who hadn't played in the first game here, showed much early life, as the Celtics fell behind, 13-8 and 21-18 at the break.

Seattle, in fact, led until the final two minutes, when Jo Jo White (20 with 8 rebounds and 8 assists), Havlicek (19) and Sidney Wicks (17 and 17 rebounds) strung together nine points and put Boston ahead to stay, 47-43.

"I knew we could get that game," Halicek said. "We just had to dig in a little bit. I don't know if they wanted it as much. Maybe we lulled them to sleep in the first quarter. . ."

And put them to rest in the third. An 18-4 spurt, launched from a 53-49 base, did the trick. Wicks, playing another strong game as sixth man, scored nine of those points. Havlicek had five more, including his 1000th of the season. It was his 15th time there in as many years, and it earned him a standing ovation from a capacity crowd of 14,098.

"I didn't even know I was close," Havlicek said later. "It was on the other side of the world as far as I was concerned."

So were the Sonics after that. The Boston lead, behind five straight Steve Kuberski points (11 in 10 minutes) grew to 21 before Seattle chopped it to eight with a 15-2 run.

That brought a timeout, a stern rebuke from Heinsohn ("play

some goddam basketball") and a 12-4 counterthrust that ended it with six minutes left. The Sonics managed only four baskets the rest of the way, preferring to shoot from outside.

"They didn't get it into the big fella (Tom Burleson) at the end," said Dave Cowens (13 points, 18 rebounds, 8 assists). "They were calling plays for him, but not giving the ball to him. Or he was passing it back out. There was no penetration in there. They were waiting for the outside stuff."

And so, Seattle went peacefully to its grave, and the Celtics, with seven victories in nine games, went sleepily to Phoenix, with another chunk of ground gained on the Knicks.

MARCH 22, 1985

CELTICS MARCH FORWARD

By Dan Shaughnessy, The Boston Globe

The noble quest for back-to-back titles will be made easier if the Celtics can win the Atlantic Division and compile the best regular-season in the NBA.

In an otherwise boring exhibition at the Boston Garden last night, the K.C.A.C. moved a step closer to both goals with a 129-117 victory over We Are The World B. Free and the Cleveland Cavaliers. Coupled with Philly's loss to Milwaukee, the Celtics now lead the Sixers by five games with 12 to play. In baseball lexicon, it would be time to invoke Paul Richards' "Call out the dogs, put out the fire, the hunt is all over."

"I'm very happy about it," said K.C. Jones, "but the Lakers have said they want the best overall record and that's motivation for us now. We still have 12 to play and would like to get the best record locked up and get our players some rest."

The Celtics have already won as many games as they did in the final year of the Bill Fitch era. Their 56-14 record puts them 4 1/2 games ahead of the Lakers and gives them a shot at the second-best record in franchise history - 68-14 and 63-19 are the top two.

Cleveland, a potential opening-round Celtic opponent in the NBA's version of the road to Lexington, put up a nice fight for 48 minutes last night but didn't have enough to avert its 14th consecutive loss to Boston. The game didn't approach blowout proportions, but one never sensed that the Celtics were threatened.

"I felt like we had control of the flow all night," admitted Kevin McHale, who had 18 points.

As usual, Larry Bird was the man who made sure that things never got out of hand. Bird's night at the ioffice resulted in 36 points, 15 assists and 8 rebounds. He made 16 of 28 floor shots

and registered his top assist total of the season (17 is his career high).

Bird had plenty of help. Robert Parish (zero points and one rebound in the first half), and Scott Wedman canned his first seven shots, finished 7 of 8 for 15 points, and is averaging 15.3 points on 62.5 percent (50-80) shooting since March 8. Celtic starting guards Danny Ainge and Dennis Johnson chipped in with 18 apiece.

The cavaliers, meanwhile, were without Phil Hubbard and Mel Turpin. Hubbard has a bum knee and didn't make the trip. Turpin spent the night in coach George Karl's doghouse and the big rookie never got off the pine.

Karl chose a strange time to discipline his highly touted rookie. The Cavaliers needed help underneath, but Karl thinks Turpin has been goofing off in practice and said, "It was a coaching decision. I didn't have a good feel for him tonight."

The humiliated Turpin countered with, "I think I've been working hard. What else am I supposed to do - break somebody's leg in practice?"

The celtics let Free (28, but only five in the second half) fire away in the first seven minutes and Free torched the Green for 13 quick ones as the Cavaliers bolted to a 19-14 lead. Bird brought the Celtice back, and Ray Williams capped a 10-0 run with a three-pointer that gave Boston a 28-25 lead.

Karl entertained the crowd by inserting blimpish Lonnie Shelton, ex-Bay State Bombardier Kevin Williams and wild man Edgar (Whirlybird) Jones before the end of the first.

Boston led, 29-27, after one. Wedman got it going with four in a row in the second, but Free shot the Cavaliers back to a 49-46 lead. Then Bird took over and the celts led, 63-60, at halftime.

Cleveland clawed back to within two several times in the third before Bird (12 in the quarter) broke it open with a three-point bomb followed by a dazzling reverse layup on which he was fouled. Bird's free throw gave the Celtice an 85-77 lead with 3:45 left in the third.

Edgar was the only thing keeping the Cavaliers afloat in the fourth, but Ainge and Wedman kept the heat on, and with 7:34 left Boston led, 109-95. That's when the Garden legions started chanting, "We want Max."

"I'm still behind M.L. (Carr) and Doug Flutie when it comes to popularity," said Max, who replaced Kevin McHale with 1:12 left. Meanwhile, DJ and Kevin Williams started shoving and both picked up technicals. Max canned a pair of garbage time free throws before everybody went home.

NOVEMBER 28, 1954

LaBINE HAS 3 GOALS, 3 ASSISTS AS BRUINS WIN, 6-3

5 Points in 2d Period Equals League Record

By Tom Fitzgerald, The Boston Globe

Leo LaBine, the laughing boy of the Bruins, hit the high point of his young hockey career last night at the Garden, scoring

three goals and three assists to tie two records - one for the league and one for the Boston club itself - as the B's swept to a 6-2 triumph over Detroit's champion Red Wings.

The 23-year-old Haileybury hurricane undoubtedly never enjoyed life more as he racked up three straight goals in a five-goal outburst in the second period.

LaBine had directly set up handy man Gus Bodnar with the first Boston goal in the first period, and then after hitting for his own triple, he set up young Don McKenney for a pair within a space of 22 seconds late in that second session.

LaBine's splurge enabled him to tie two records.

1. The national hockey League mark for most points in a period (five), previously set by Les Cunningham in January, 1940, and by Max Bentley in January, 1943, while both men were with Chicago;

2. The Bruins' record of most points in a game (six) established by Bill Cowley in 1940. that all-time center ice star equalled his own mark twice subsequently (in '42 and '44), and Red Sullivan also collected six in January of '53 against the Rangers.

Henderson Good, Too

In view of LaBine's performance, there was a tendency to overlook a good goal-tending demonstration by lanky John Henderson.

The 21-year-old netminder put on his best show in seven games as Jim Henry's sub. He had 33 saves and several of them were beauties with Gordie Howe, Ted Lindsay and marcel Bonin among his special victims.

The kid wasn't beaten until the last eight minutes when Glen Skov dunked a Bonin rebound from directly in front and Marcel Provost crashed right on top of him for the second, with Skov assisting.

Those were definitely consolatory items, though. All through the earlier part of the game the B's practically threatened to chase the once almost unbeatable Wings out into Causeway st.

That was true in the first period, even though the Bruins had only a 1-0 lead, provided by Bodnar who was about to return to the bench after killing a penalty.

Instead Bodnar went off on a two-on-one breakaway with Lorne Ferguson. LaBine came streaking up behind them, and took a deft pass from Bodnar. LaBine's shot that time was blocked, but Bodnar nudged home the rebound.

LaBine got his first tally at 2:39 in the second, faking Terry Sawchuk nicely and then backhanding one into the strings after Real Chevretils had sent him in.

The game blew open when Lindsay and Marty Pavelich went off for minor penalties within 34 seconds. LaBine clicked twice while both were in the box.

Chevretils sent LaBine in again at 6:04 and Bill Quackenbush and Fleming Mackell both hand a hand on the next one at 7:02. At the tag end of the period McKenney notched his quickies, both on diversions of LaBine long shots, to break a long scoreless streak of 14 games for the rookie that dated back to oct. 20 when he got his fifth at New York.

The game was frequently rough but there was no real violence until the last two seconds when Bonin, who was a bear wrestler in Canadian country fairs a few years ago, decided to take on Fergie Flaman.

The bears probably were a lot softer opponents. Bonin got all the worst of the set-to, although he managed to pull off Flaman's jersey. They fussed a little in the runway as they left the ice, and players from both sides made for the scene. They were

quickly pacified by the officials.

JANUARY 22, 1967

BUCYK'S GOAL WINS FOR BRUINS, 3-1

**Tail-Enders Capture Second In Row For First
Time Since November**

By Tom Fitzgerald, The Boston Globe

Capt. Johnny Bucyk scored one of the most artful goals of his 10-year's service with the Bruins Sunday night in the Garden to give his team the clincher in a 3-1 victory over the Toronto Maple Leafs.

This was also a great second-effort production, made at 6:47 of the final period by the black-haired veteran, Going in from the center zone with a pass from Murray Oliver, Bucyk first eluded defenseman Kent Douglas. Then, near the goal, he slipped inside Ron Ellis.

Johnny finished off from up close at the left with a pop into the far side past chubby Bruce Gamble whose all but miraculous goal keeping had been giving the Bruins and the 13,619 onlookers the fits most of the evening.

Just to make things even more gratifying, Eddie Westfall scaled a shot into an empty Toronto net with 20 seconds remaining after Coach Punch Imlach had pulled Gamble out in favor of an extra shooter at 18:53.

The Bucyk goal broke up a tight battle that had been tied in the opening period.

The first of these goals came on a power play at 10:11 when a Bobby Orr shot from the point deflected in off Ron Stewart.

Rambunctious Eddie Shack tied it at 16:41 from right outside the crease after a pass from far out on the right by Bob Pulford.

That was the only goal the Leafs could make against Eddie Johnston who came up with another solid performance to give the Bruins their second straight win, following up the Saturday matinee triumph over New York.

This was only the second time this year the Bruins have been able to put two together. They did it before on Nov. 10 and 13 against Toronto and Montreal.

Johnston had only 17 saves, but some of them were very good ones. The best came shortly after Bucyk's goal when Eddie came far out to block off Don Brenneman, in all alone and with nobody even in close pursuit.

Gamble, who was featured in the old Boston goalie parade some five years ago, was fantastic at times.

The fat boy, who is holding the fort with both Johnnie Bower and Terry Sawchuk on the casualty list, really frustrated the fast skating and sharpshooting Bruins in the first period.

Bruce turned aside 17 tries in that opening 20 minutes and had 11 in each of the last two.

A moment of high excitement for the spectators came early in the third period when Orr squared off with Toronto's Larry Jeffrey. Bobby decked his rival twice and the brilliant Boston rookie was so incensed he picked up a 10-minute misconduct as he as his major from referee John Ashley.

Orr got a tremendous ovation when he returned in the late minutes. In the early part of the game Bobby made two sensational rushes only to be robbed by Gamble.

JUNE 7, 1935

WELCH PITCHES AND RED SOX WIN 2 TO 1

**Dahlgren hits Ball Effectively Against the
Yankees With Broaca on the Mound**

By Gerry Moore, The Boston Globe

Although there was no foundation for the report that Jimmy Foxx was coming to the Red Sox, "Babe" Dahlgren clouted the ball yesterday as if his first-base berth were at stake.

Moreover, long Johnny Welch, starting his first game in almost a month, pitched as if he thought he were going to be traded, too.

Consequently the Red Sox sgaded the league-leading New York Yankees, 2 to 1, in the opening contest of an important four-game series, played at Fenway Park before a 10,000 Ladies' Day gathering.

All the runs were scored in the fourth inning, and from that fact it can bbe deduced that the Croninmen came from behind to annex the coveted decision.

Welch's mound foe was none other than good old Johnny Broaca, the despectacled Lawrence resident and Yale graduate. Broaca was just slightly less effective than long John and, if the former Eli star could have hit the ball himself on a couple of occasions, might have come out on top.

Hits Lou Gehrig

Welch pried off the fourth inning by hitting Larrupin' Lou Gehrig in the small of the back. "Push 'Em Up Tony" Lazzeri then pushed his patented hit-and-run single between first and second, Gehrig galloping to third.

Dangerous Bill Dickey thereupon smacked a slow grounder toward second, which Oscar Melillo, the Spinach-eater, who was positively sensational afield yesterday, elected to turn into a lightning double play. Gehrig, of course, scored during the operations.

Melo Almada next lost George Selkirk's high loft in the wind, close to the left center field fence, and George was awarded his second successive double. Just as he had done in the second inning with Selkirk on second, Cronin ordered Welch to walk Frankie Crosetti to get Broaca. The move was successful as Lawrence John was called out on strikes.

After Roy Jackson skied to Selkirk in the Red Sox turn, Cronin picked out a slow ball and lathered it off the left field barrier for two bases. Carl Reynolds promptly dispatched his manager over the pan with a sharp single into left. Earl Combs' aging arm prevented him from cutting Cronin off at the plate.

"Rick" Farrell followed with his second hit, a line doubled off the left field wall, and Reynolds arrived at third.

Dahlgren Doubles

The Yankee infield came in and Reynolds was trapped between third and home when Melillo rapped a bouncer to Crosetti. The danger seemed over for the Yanks even though Farrell reached third on the play.

That was figuring without the inspiring Dahlgren lad, however, "Babe" responded by lacing a double into the left field corner to account for "Rick" with what proved to be the winning run. As future events bore out, it didn't matter that Welch popped to Crosetti to end the chapter with Melillo on third and Dahlgren on second.

"Babe" had opened the second inning with a towering triple off the left center field wall and later singled to left to open the seventh and complete a perfect day at the bat.

For the rest of the route, Welch was well-nigh invincible. He faced only 17 batters, two over perfect figures, yielded only three hits, and only one Yankee advanced beyond first base.

Combs singled to open the fifth, but was doubled off first when Chapman lined to Cronin. Earl also singled as first batter in the eighth and, after Rolfe and Chapman died, was forced at second on the best fielding play of the day.

Gehrig slashed a sizzler to Melillo's right. "Ossie" flashed over, quicker than a cat, and grabbed the ball on the first bounce. It was one of his seven assists.

Dickey singled with one out in the ninth and Jesse Hill ran for him, but got no further than second base as Selkirk rolled to Welch and Crosetti fled to Reynolds.

Pitching About Even

The figures on the pitching were remarkably even. Welch and Broaca each allowed seven hits. Broaca gave four passes and Welch, three, but the latter hit Gehrig which evened up the free tickets. Welch fanned three to Broaca's two and seven men were left on bases by each time.

However, Broaca was in trouble just a little more often than his rival.

Werber drew one of his three walks in the first and stole second for his 10th pilfer of the season, two behind Almada. Cronin left Bill there as he popped to Gehrig.

In the fifth, Broaca walked Werber and Roy Johnson with only one out, but Cronin hit into a double play. Welch sacrificed Dahlgren to second in the seventh and Werber strolled to fill up first base, but Roy Johnson fouled to Gehrig.

JULY 21, 1988

BOYD KEEPS RED SOX ROLLING, 6-1

Boston Wins 8th Straight

By Larry Whiteside, The Boston Globe

Let us hear no more about a bullpen role for Oil Can Boyd. When he's right, he is a stylist and one of the American League's best starting pitchers.

The Can was near perfect last night in a 6-1 victory over the

Chicago White Sox before a rain-drenched crowd of 32,049 at Fenway Park -- the Red Sox' eighth win in as many games under new manager Joe Morgan. Boyd retired the first 19 batters he faced before Steve Lyons ended his bid for a perfect game with one-out single in the seventh.

After completing his seven-inning stint, in which he threw only 80 pitches and allowed but one hit, Boyd went to the clubhouse and watched his teammates provide further support with four runs in the eighth. As a result, the Red Sox moved within 4 1/2 games of idle first-place Detroit in the American League East and rewrote a couple of lines in the club record book. Their 8-0 mark is their best getaway ever after the All-Star break. It also gives Morgan the best start ever by a Boston manager -- with one more win than Steve O'Neill chalked up in his debut in 1950.

The game was not without its anxious moments. Boyd departed with a 2-0 lead, but reliever Tom Bolton turned it into a one-run game by surrendering three straight singles in the eighth. Bob Stanley bailed out Bolton and notched his second save.

This was vintage Boyd. It was clear the speculation he might be shipped to the bullpen if he continued to falter had lit a fire under the skinny righthander.

"I was mad and was very intense," said Boyd, who added he knew while warming up in the bullpen that he had good stuff. "I just wanted to show people I can pitch, and don't scratch me out like that. I can throw and I feel like I can help this ballclub."

In Boyd's last 11 starts, he had gone 2-5 with a 6.10 earned run average. Against the White Sox, he was in command, as evidenced by his six strikeouts, equaling his season high.

"I knew about the no-hitter," said Boyd, who was removed from the game after he developed stiffness in his right shoulder. "But when I lost it, I said, 'That's OK. The thing to do now is win.'"

"Things didn't go well in the first half of the season. But it's going to be different in the second. People have said the Sox need Oil Can. Roger Clemens will be there; so will Bruce Hurst. I'm the missing link."

Boyd's fastball was better, but it wasn't his lone weapon. His curve was a hammer, and he dropped it several times. He kept the White Sox off balance with an assortment of sliders -- which is why he lost his no-hit bid.

"I had never faced him before," said Lyons, the former Boston utilityman who has found a home at third base with Chicago. "He threw me a fastball in the first inning, and I never saw another one after that. He got ahead of me with a slider. So I looked for a breaking ball in that situation and got one that I could drive. He did a good job of pitching tonight."

Morgan said he didn't hesitate to remove Boyd.

"He looked like the old Oil Can to me, only better," said the manager. "I might have left him in a little longer if there was a no-hitter. But he'd already told me in the sixth that his shoulder was tender. I was happy with his seven innings. It was exactly what we need right now. I'd rather have nine, but I'll take seven."

Boyd was given the support he needed in the first when the Red Sox scored two unearned runs off Jack McDowell (4-8). Wade Boggs led off by reaching on an error by second baseman Fred Manrique, one of four Chicago blunders for the night. Boggs advanced to second on Marty Barrett's single, took third on Daryl Boston's error on the play and scored on Mike Greenwell's fielder's choice. Ellis Burks made it 2-0 when he doubled home Greenwell.

The game was still in doubt when Bolton failed in the eighth.

The lefthander began the inning by striking out Greg

Walker. Then Dave Gallagher batted for Boston and singled to right. Donnie Hill hit for Mark Salas and beat out a grounder to third. When Ozzie Guillen singled up the middle, scoring Gallagher, it was a 2-1 game and the call went to Stanley.

The Steamer worked quickly and efficiently. Manrique grounded into a forceout at second. Then Stanley slipped a third strike past Ken Williams to end the threat.

The Red Sox came charging back for four runs in the bottom of the eighth, again taking advantage of Chicago's porous defense. Singles by Todd Benzinger and Jody Reed set the table.

Kevin Romine, who had replaced Larry Parrish at first base, hit a grounder to short, and Benzinger seemed dead as he tried to score from third. But catcher Ron Karkovice failed to hold on to the ball as Benzinger bumped him.

At first, Benzinger didn't realize it and almost gave up on the play. "But I heard the crowd noise, and I knew something was up," he said. "I never saw the ball on the ground. I just went for home. The pitcher was there blocking the plate, but I went around him."

Down, 3-1, Chicago manager Jim Fregosi brought in lefty Rick Horton, who retired pinch hitter Rick Cerone. Boggs then delivered a two-run triple, extending his hitting streak to 14 games and boosting the Red Sox lead to 5-1. Barrett's single brought Boggs home, and the beat goes on.

NOVEMBER 23, 1862

3 TD STRIKES BY YEWICIC STEER PATS TO 21-10 WIN

By John Ahearn, The Boston Globe

Playing only because an emergency situation dictated that he had to be used, Tommy Yewcic came through in a big league fashion at B.U. Field Friday night, steering the Patriots to a come-from-behind victory, 21 to 10, over the Buffalo Bills and sending the Boston club back into first place in the American Football League's Eastern Div.

The former catcher in the Detroit Tigers' farm system, who was in action only because Babe Parilli, the regular quarterback, is out for the season, threw for three touchdowns and ran his team very well in a game that had to be won if the Patriots were to stay alive.

Yewcic ran the show in hold, daring fashion, twice attempting and completing the long gainers, the type of play the experts said he couldn't make go.

He had help on all those scores last night. Jimmy Colclough, Ron Burton and Gino Cappalletti - his receivers on these glory runs - all made great catches and runs.

His offensive line played what had to be its best game, giving him maximum protection.

And the Boston defense made sure the lead stood up once it was established.

But it was Yewcic who had the courage to try the imaginative plays, and at the end the large crowd rose and gave him a great ovation, a salute worthy of a suf who comes off the bench and saves the day.

Success was not instananeous. It took some warming up

before it was attained. And it took another one of those comebacks - the seventh for Boston in its 11 games this season - to bring this off.

Methodical Buffalo opened by grinding out yardage from the goal line to mid field before Jack Kemp threw 49 yards to Elbert Dubennion on the Boston six, where the tall receiver wrestled the ball away from Chuck Shonta.

Attempting to pass, Kemp had to rollout on the next play and his momentum carried him over to put Boston in a hole.

Always in previous games it would be Parilli who came out and hoisted his team. Friday night there was no Parilli. This time it was Yewcic, untried, untested and green as the grass in running the ballclub.

But this new boy, whose previous duties had been confined to kicking only, put on a show worthy of a Parilli or any other good quarterback in the league.

It took him a lttle time after Buffalo's score to get going. When he did, the patriots went all the way. Hen engineered the 84-yard drive cleverly, starting it with a nine yard pass to Cappalletti. He used burton and Jim Crawford for long gainers to the right side and then set up the right side and then set up the touchdown with a 12-yard pass to Jimmy Colclough for a first down on the Buffalo 31.

That was a daring pass right up the middle and Yewcic got away with it. Only the very brave would come back with it and the Bills didn't thing an inexperienced player would have the guts.

They packed in to stop the running game, so Yewcic sent Colclough down the right side and when Jimmy faked the safety man out of his shoes, he went back to the middle.

Just as he got to the goal line the pass was waiting for him. He caught it and stepped in. Cappy kicked the point to tie it.

A defensive game by Jess Richardson, Jack Rudolph and Tommy Addison set the second touchdown in motion. That trio stopped Buffalo twice, both times with only a yard to go for a first down on the Patriots 11.

Yewcic took it from there. His pass to Colclough was good for a first down on the 26 and then it seemed he was going to lose all that gain and more when two tacklers had him pinned almost through the goal.

How he squirmed through is a mystery, but squirm through he did. He ran for 10 yards before he spotted Burton standing all alone at the 41. Burton caught the ball and hightailed it the rest of the way and Cappy booted another.

Yewcic bailed out the team late in the third quarter when he punted out from the end zone to the Buffalo 45. The Bills came back, but had to settle for only three points instead of a touchdown on Mac Yoho's 36-yard field goal.

As soon as Boston got the ball back, Yewcic took the Patriots all the way passing for 64 yards in six plays, the clincher a 19-yard job to Cappy under the goal posts.

The victory was wrought by all departments. Defensively Boston was at its best, holding Buffalo's running game to 63 yards. The average until now had been 180 per game.

Chuck Shonta had a tremendous night knocking down and intercepting passes and the offensive line gave Yewcic all the protection he needed.

But if one man must be credited, it has to be Yewcic. He came through in the clutch with 12 of 17 for 231 yards and three scores. And he has rekindled title hopes, which were pretty close to dead before the game started.

DECEMBER 4, 1983

PATRIOTS WEATHER THE STORM AND SAINTS

Collins' 3-Yard TD Proves Enough, 7-0

By Ron Borges, The Boston Globe

FOXBOROUGH - Tony Eason had no idea how significant it was when Tony Collins trudged around the left side of the patriots' offensive line for a 3-yard touchdown with yesterday's game just 6:11 old, but excuse him for that.

He is a rookie from California, after all, and untutored in such matters. He had no idea that the first touchdown can also be the last when the skies are gray and the sleet begins to mount up, turning your fingers into uncontrollable monsters with wills of their own.

Although he played two years of college football at Illinois, Eason had never been asked to throw a football in such conditions, and yesterday he played nearly 20 minutes before his coaches suggested he try. The moment he did, however, he realized what that first touchdown might mean.

"Stanley [Morgan] was wide open," said Eason, who handed the Patriots (7-7) a 7-0 victory over the New Orleans Saints (7-7) by handing off 44 times in 54 plays, thereby avoiding as many problems as possible at wind-blown and wet Sullivan Stadium.

"It was a touchdown. But I tried to drill the ball. It got halfway there and took off. It was ridiculous."

For Eason, who was making his second start because Steve Grogan's fractured fibula, it was also another learning experience. But this time he learned by not doing.

What he did, for the most part, was simply pivot as quickly as possible, slip the ball into the belly of fullback Mosi Tatupu (who rushed for 128 yards in 21 carries) and try to avoid the turnovers that were fatal to the Saints.

For Tatupu, it was the biggest afternoon of his six-year career and his first 100-yard rushing day since he began accepting checks for carrying a football. But despite his performance, the day did not turn on his massive legs.

Rather, it turned on the reedthin ones of kick returner Ricky Smith, who produced the game's most significant play on the opening one of the afternoon.

"I had some debate over whether to receive or kick at the start of a game," Meyer said. "A good part of our game plan had to be scrapped, because of the weather. I knew we had to go back to the early 1940s and use a basic game plan and play good defense."

But being an offensive coach at heart, Meyer could not pass up the football. And when he got it, Ricky Smith could not pass up returning it 53 yards to the New Orleans 36, a play that seemed to shock the NFC's No. 1-rated defense into a momentary state of confusion.

"We hit them very quickly," guard Ron Wooten said. "We knew that because of the conditions the first team to score had the advantage, because it would be very tough to mount a long drive. We caught them off guard and that gave us immediate momentum."

When Smith took the kick, however, he was not thinking of

sprinting free along the right sideline, because that was not the route of this return. But after Tatupu slammed his body into one Saint and Lin Dawson flattened a second, there was suddenly an opening where none was intended.

"We had a middle return call, but there was a little hole big enough for anyone to get through on my right," Smith said. "Then I hit shoulder pads with their end. He fell down, and was off and running."

As he broke free, Smith thought he at last had the touchdown return that had eluded him all season. But as he lined up kicker Morton Anderson in his sights, Smith momentarily lost sight of the sideline. Moments later, he would pay for that.

"When I tried to elude Anderson, I couldn't pick up the sideline," Smith said. "I stepped out. But that return set the momentum for the whole game."

For the next nine plays Eason handed off, first one way and then the other, as new England's offensive line smelled a quick kill. That line slammed the Saints around, with Tatupu doing the bulk of the work until Collins (who was held to 19 yards in eight carries) went around the left side for his 3-yard touchdown that ended things before they started.

From that point on it was the Patriots' defense (which recorded its second shutout of the year) against Ken Stabler, and Tony Eason against the elements. The patriots won one and the elements won the other, although the latter mattered little.

"Both teams played for field position all afternoon," Stabler said, "but we didn't make the short third-down situations we usually make."

Indeed, they did not. The Saints converted just 33 percent of their third-down chances while losing three of their four fumbles. Those mistakes nullified a 71-yard advantage in total offense (278-207) and a whopping 113-yard advantage in passing that resulted from Eason struggling through a 3-for-10 afternoon that produced just 16 yards passing.

Because of Eason's passing problems, the Saints had their share of opportunities, the best of which came in the fourth quarter, when the elements had left both teams reeling. But New England's defense refused to yield under the strain, and its offense produced just enough yardage on one final drive to consume nearly 4 1/2 minutes of time.

After Anderson missed a 35-yard field goal with just over six minutes to play, the Patriots marched from their 35 to New Orleans' 6, with Tatupu carrying six straight times for 53 yards. The game could have been safely tucked away had Fred Steinfort not missed a 24-yard field goal (his third misfire of the afternoon), but it mattered little because, as those who had seen this kind of weather knew, you can march only so far when the sleet is piling up around you and 80 yards is far too many.

"That first touchdown was the ballgame," linebacker Steve Nelson said. "The way the weather was going, you knew one play would probably be the ballgame. We made it with that kick return."

Boston Vintage Sports Flashback

Published every 2 weeks by David C. Southwick. Published for informational. Research and entertainment purposes only. Publisher may be reached at soxpapers@gmail.com